Red Tide: Evaluating the Activity of Non-Agricultural Workers in Revolutionary Russia

What was the role of non-agricultural workers in the Bolshevik revolution between February and October 1917? Discuss.

History

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Table of Contents

Introduction....2

Initial Revolutionary Activity....2

Strikes in Russia....2

Workers Leading February....3

Activity Post-February....5

Factionalism....6

The July days....8

Lack of Success....9

Class Divides....10

July's Failure....12

Revolutionary Activity Post-July....14

Decreased Activity....14

The Kornilov Affair....15

The Bolshevik's Consolidation of Power....16

October Itself....18

Conclusion....20

Bibliography....21

Introduction

Marxist theory states that the proletariat must lead the revolution that will start the transition into true Communism.[1] However, the notion of the non-agricultural worker's role in the revolution of 1917 is up for debate. There is no doubt that workers participated in the strikes of 1917, but the extent of their revolutionary ideology is difficult to pin down. While it can be argued that workers were striking with legitimately revolutionary intent, it is also possible that workers were simply striking due to being fed up with poor working conditions. Through thorough research, quantifying this role is possible. The role of non-agricultural workers in the 1917 revolution was initially that of leading revolutionary efforts and legitimizing the Provisional Government by utilizing revolutionary methods of reform, but shifted to organized revolt led by the Bolsheviks by October.

Initial Revolutionary Activity

During and directly after the February Revolution, the initial revolutionary activity of non-agricultural workers could be characterized by revolutionary activity such as strikes and riots being used as legitimate means of reform for workers rights.[2]

Strikes in Russia

In pre-industrial Russia, protest was often utilized to create reform, which arguably led to the strike becoming a tool in the Russian worker's arsenal as industrialization continued.[3]

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[1]Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition Series 9780143106265 (Penguin Publishing Group, 2011), 79.

[2]William G. Rosenberg and Diane P. Koenker, "The Limits of Formal Protest: Worker Activism and Social Polarization in Petrograd and Moscow, March to October, 1917," *The American Historical Review* 92, no. 2 (1987): [Page 303], https://doi.org/10.2307/1866619

[3]Ronald Grigor Suny, "Violence and Class Consciousness in the Russian Working Class," Slavic Review 41, no. 3 (1982): 437, https://doi.org/10.2307/2497016

Furthermore, the Tsarist government's allowance of the creation of labor unions in the aftermath of the 1905 revolution led to the quiet growth of the labor movement, which strikes were a central part of.[4] By the beginning of the February Revolution, worker's activism had reached a point of extremity.[5] For example, on January 9th, the anniversary of the Bloody Sunday Massacre, around 204,000 total workers protested across Russia, which led into several weeks of protesting leading up to February. Additionally, an estimated 400,000 workers were revolting by the end of the February Revolution in Petrograd alone.[6] Through these examples, it can be seen that, to the Russian working class, strikes were a successful method of revolt that could also possibly be applied to reform.

Workers Leading February

Another characteristic of protest during the February Revolution was that it was largely worker led. While revolutionary leaders such as Lenin were leading the labor movement in February from outside of the country, they weren't in favor of any protest on the day the February Revolution started, sparked by a group of women beginning a food riot.[7] [8] Lenin and other leaders were afraid of their revolutionary efforts being squashed if they protested too frequently, so they declared a no-strike day on Women's Day, the day the riots began.[9] However,

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[4]Steve Smith, "Moscow Workers and the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917," *Soviet Studies* 36, no. 2 (1984): 283, http://www.jstor.org/stable/151392

[5]Neil Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest, 1917," in *A People's History of the Russian Revolution* (Pluto Press, 2017), 112, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1k85dnw

[6]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 129.

[7]Leon Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution, trans. Max Eastman (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 1932), 75.

[8]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 113.

[9]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 112.

this didn't stop people from protesting, the original food riot quickly turning into a massive wave of strikes.[10] The February Revolution went on to be extremely violent, disorganized and chaotic. Without firm leadership, workers acted of their own accord, and cossack, police and military violence escalated what was initially a more peaceful strike into fullscale violence between both sides.[11] This is exemplified in the conflict on February 25 near the Kazan Cathedral, where armoured and armed workers went up against the whips of the soldiers and managed to topple the police force with knives, hand grenades and other weaponry.[12] In the February Revolution, Workers were an unstoppable revolutionary force, rallying the people around them. This is shown In *A People's History of the Russian Revolution,* Neil Faulkner cites a quote from a Bolshevik involved in the revolution, writing "The movement which has started has flared up without any party preparing it and without any preliminary discussion of a plan of action."[13] As is reflected in this quote and the rest of the event, the February Revolution was undoubtedly a worker-led revolt, a characteristic of Revolutionary Russia that would echo in other forms of activity.

Activity Post-February

As a result of the strike's central role in the Russian labor movement even after February, city workers used many of the same methods to seek reform.[14] [15] A good example of this is the

[10]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 113.

[11]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 114.

[12]Trotsky, History of the Russian, 77.

[13]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 130.

[14]Diane Koenker, Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution (Princeton University Press, 1981), 293-294.

[15]William G. Rosenberg, "Understanding Strikes in Revolutionary Russia," Russian History 16, no. 2/4 (1989): 270, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24656508

March 10 accord, which was reached due to worker's efforts in protest by the Petrograd Society of Factory and Mill Owners (PSFMO).[16] This accord put in place the eight hour workday law as well as added two key players to the rest of the revolution, the conciliation boards and factory committees.[17] [18] The conciliation boards acted as mediators between the workers and management and helped them to make agreements, whereas the factory committees were created to act as the worker's representative.[19] [20] In addition to these factors, workers were often able to secure reform due to the sheer sweeping number of them or by utilizing the issue of continued production and profit.[21] This can be seen in the majority of metal worker's strikes in the spring, which yielded favorable results due to higher up's fears of production falling.[22] This also shows the worker's goal at the time, not to overthrow, but to simply secure better conditions.[23] [24] With the amount of workers willing to mobilize and protest, the Petrograd working class could've easily risen up against the ruling class.[25] Yet, directly after February, workers were still optimistic about the new governing system and willing to play along with the Provisional Government,

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[16]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 301.

[17]Ibid

[18]Heather Hogan, "Conciliation Boards in Revolutionary Petrograd: Aspects of the Crisis of Labor-Management Relations in 1917," Russian History 9, no. 1 (1982): 50, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24652822

[19]Frederick I. Kaplan, "II: Labor Under the Provisional Government," in Bolshevik Ideology and the Ethics of Soviet Labor (New York: Philosophical Library, 1968), 45-46.

[20]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 302.

[21]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 306.

[22]Koenker, Moscow Workers, 300-301.

[23]Victoria E. Bonnell, "Rethinking the Role of Workers in the Revolutions of 1917," International Labor and Working-Class History, no. 26 (1984): 55, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27671539

[24]William Rosenberg, "Workers and Workers' Control in the Russian Revolution," *History Workshop*, no. 5 (1978): 93, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288160

[25]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 136.

provided reform was put in place.[26] This support can be seen in the June Duma Election results, where the Kadets and Socialist Revolutionaries, the primary parties of the Provisional Government, won a combined 84.9% of the vote in central Moscow.[27]

Factionalism

Another initial characterization of non-agricultural workers in the 1917 revolution was their tendency to skew into factions, or the phenomenon of sekhovshchina (factionalism). [28] While a united working class would be ideal to create reform, workers often split off from a more complete workforce into separate, smaller delegations based on factory, position or occupation.[29] This aspect of the working class during the Russian Revolution almost directly counters Marx's dialectical, which urges workers to unite as a whole to overthrow the Bourgeoisie.[30] Some scholars argue that factionalism inhibited the growth of the Russian labor movement, which would inhibit revolutionary organization throughout 1917. [31] However, many sources argue that it did not affect worker's organization throughout the revolution and instead made way for growing class consciousness.[32] While workers were ultimately divided, they were all experiencing the same oppression.[33] The development of class consciousness in individual

[26]Bonnell, "Rethinking the Role," 55.

[27]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 202.

[28]Smith, "Moscow Workers," 287-288.

[29]Rosenberg, "Workers and Workers,'" 93-94.

[30]Marx and Engels, "The Communist", 104.

[31]Rosenberg, "Workers and Workers,'" 94.

[32]Steve Smith, "Craft Consciousness, Class Consciousness: Petrograd 1917," History Workshop, no. 11 (1981): 33-34, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288347

[33]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 113.

factions led to increased development of class consciousness as a whole as workers became less and less divided as 1917 continued. This increased unity can be seen in the establishment of many interfactional committees to manage revolutionary activity, one example being the Petrograd Central Council of Factory Committees that was established in June.[34] It has been speculated that this characteristic was brought on partially by Tsarist Russia's harsh labor laws and crushing of any potential unionization or uprising, making organization difficult on a level larger than within one's factory.[35] This can be seen in the Duma's attempt to dissipate any forming Soviets after the 1905 revolution.[36] As with strikes as a method of reform, this aspect of the Russian working class prevailed even after the February Revolution, factionalism still echoing in the continuing formation of Soviets.[37] The factor of factionalism is important to characterize the worker's role as it acted as a system of division between different parts of the working class. After February, workers could've united as a whole, but instead they chose to form Soviets based on pre-existing factions.[38] The differences in factions can be seen in the distribution of strikes, which varied in purpose between different crafts.[39] For example, food workers struck largely for better working conditions, with 53.3% of workers, whereas clothing workers struck primarily for higher wages, with 50.0% of workers.[40] Yet, as stated before, factionalism did not do much to negatively affect the labor movement. Overall, 43.7% of

[34]Smith, "Craft Consciousness," 40.

[35]Smith, "Craft Consciousness," 35.

[36]Smith, "Moscow Workers," 284.

[37]Smith, "Craft Consciousness," 35-36.

[38]Ibid

[39]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 311.

[40]Ibid

workers struck for higher wages, so although the food workers had a different demand of choice, the majority of the working class was still focused on the same issue.[41] This helped foster a more organized working class later on in the revolution as uniting conditions worsened.[42] [43]

The July days

The July Days, which took place from July 3 to July 7, were a definitive turning point in the revolutionary activity of non-agricultural workers in 1917. There was a massive spike in the number of workers striking, which jumped by around 10,000 workers from the amount of striking workers in June.[44] Where pre-July, workers were largely striking to secure reform and in this playing along with the Provisional Government, post-July the focus had shifted.[45] [46] Now, the goal was overturning authority in favor of a new system.[47]

Lack of Success

A large source behind the unrest during July were the quickly shrinking success rates of strikes.[48] While initially after the February Revolution worker's strikes largely wrought successful reform, by the time July rolled around the political climate had vastly changed. This

[41]Ibid

[42]Smith, "Craft Consciousness," 40.

[43]Smith, "Moscow Workers," 287.

[44]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 297.

[45]David Mandel, "The July Days," in On the Russian Revolution: The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime (Palgrave Macmillian, 1983), 192, https://europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article16626

[46]Rosenberg, "Understanding Strikes," 283.

[47]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 310.

[48]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 315.

can be seen in the fact that, leading up to the July Days, only around one third of strikes were fruitful, a noticeable decrease from before.[49] This led to growing amounts of unrest in the workers, many taking to the streets and escalating methods of protest to rioting. This was exemplified in the increasing number of food riots, which were also brought on by rising wartime prices.[50] While at first workers had struck for working class reforms, now further contempt for the ruling class was evident; the whole government needed an overhaul. The Provisional Government and factory owner groups such as the Petrograd and Moscow Societies for Factory and Mill Owners were moving further and further away from what workers wanted and closer to their own interests in policy, which, combined with the continuing failures of protest, led to worker's unrest and action increasing exponentially.[51] [52] This contempt for the Provisional Government's treatment of workers in opposition to industrialists can be seen in a quote from a Putilov worker published in Pravda: "We have seen with our own eyes ... how the present Provisional Government refuses to take the resolute measures against the capitalists, without which our demands cannot be satisfied. The interests of the capitalists are dearer to it than the interests of the working class."[53] Conciliation boards, which were initially set up to resolve conflict between workers and owners were failing in their mission, many disputes further intensified rather than settled by the first few weeks of June.[54] The board's tendency to favor workers led to increasingly antagonized industrialists, and conflicts were dragged out to last

[49]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 317.

[50]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 310.

[51]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 308-309.

[52]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 297.

[53]Steve Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories 1917-1918* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 124.

[54]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 312.

weeks or even months.[55] This failure was instrumental in stoking the revolutionary spirit of workers.

Class Divides

Despite their best efforts and continued strikes, the workers were still unable to be heard by the bourgeoisie.[56] Workers wanted the government to work towards reform and give them more power in the government, whereas owners and other Bourgeoisie believed the government had a duty to uphold Capitalism in Russia and keep them in power.[57] This led to the workers increasingly supporting the Bolshevik party due to the Bolshevik's promotion of workers'control.[58] This growth in support can be seen in the number of votes for the Bolsheviks in democratic elections, which went up from 75,409 in June to 199,337 in September, a winning majority.[59] Additionally, the costs of WWI and inflation in Revolutionary Russia led to the upper class becoming more reserved in the concessions they were willing to give to protesting workers.[60] For example, when a metalworker's union attempted to procure industry-wide wages starting in May, it took until mid-July for negotiations to garner any success.[61] In many similar cases, negotiations were not as successful.[62] This increasing divide between the working and

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[55]Ibid

[56]Rosenberg, "Understanding Strikes," 284-285.

[57]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 315.

[58]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 213.

[59]Ibid

[60]Ronald Grigor Suny, "Toward a Social History of the October Revolution," The American Historical Review 88, no. 1 (1983): 37-38, https://doi.org/10.2307/1869344

[61]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 319.

[62]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 320.

ruling class can be seen in the shift of targets for protests. Where before workers would often protest by dragging foremen or managers out of factories or threatening them, now they targeted higher ups and owners in these attacks.[63] To add insult to injury, owners began to walk back concessions given to workers during the early days of the revolution. For example, many employers in Petrograd ignored the new restrictions on the eight hour working day and refused to add tips to paychecks.[64] The owners and leaders were so unwilling to cooperate that failure turned to further revolt and the urge to overthrow the government.[65] It seemed, without complete overhaul, there would be no change in worker's oppression, which seemed to be an endless uphill battle against the bourgeoisie.

July's Failure

Like the February Revolution, the outbreak of the July Days was an organic explosion of protests caused by worsening conditions.[66] Initially, workers began to protest without much organization at all, and while July was a short stint of strikes, they were some of the largest in number during 1917 as a whole.[67] Also akin to February, revolutionary parties took some convincing to join the workers' protests, with the Bolsheviks only eventually joining in with strikes.[68] While Revolutionary spirit was present in both groups, the Bolshevik leaders were much less prone to actual action than the workers.[69] This is due to the fact that, as intelligentsia,

[63]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 313.

[64]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 318.

[65]Rosenberg, "Understanding Strikes," 290.

[66]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 151.

[67]Ibid

[68]Mandel, "The July," 189.

[69]Trotsky, *History of the Russian*, 75.

the issues that affected workers didn't affect them. They were able to get enough food and money, whereas many workers struggled constantly with starvation and low pay.[70] While the Bolsheviks were aware of these issues, they had no sense of urgency, whereas for the workers revolution was life or death. In this, workers were the driving force behind revolutionary activity. However, although the workers drove reform and revolt, without the help of a more organized political party, there was no hope, as can be seen in July's ultimate failure.[71] Historians like Neil Faulkner argue that the July Days were a cry for recognition from the workers, shouting out for the revolutionaries they idolized to do something about the state of Russia.[72] This can be seen in a worker's meeting at the Schlusselburg Powder Works, where workers resolved "Enough hesitations! In the name of freedom, in the name of peace, in the name of the worldwide proletarian revolution, the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers, and Peasants' Deputies must seize power!".[73] However, it is also possible that the July Days, like many other examples of revolutionary activity in 1917, was simply the result of unrest reaching a head.[74] Unlike February, the July Days were ultimately unsuccessful in creating largescale positive reform.[75] There was no change, and the workers were left in a worse state than they started out in, with further reform taking a standstill and more extreme policy on protesting.[76] Four long days of fighting for the future, and to no avail. The failure of the July Days

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[70]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 113.

[71]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 154.

[72]Mandel, "The July," 190.

[73]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 155-156.

[74]Trotsky, *History of the Russian*, 76.

[75]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 155-156.

[76]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 318-319.

exemplified how hard it would be for workers to create revolution or even reform on their own in the current political climate. This combined with the Bolshevik party's unwavering support of working class goals and ideologies went to push the workers further from the Provisional Government and, ultimately, into the arms of the Bolsheviks.[77] [78]

Revolutionary Activity Post-July

While there was a cooldown of strikes in late July and August due to the Provisional Government's condemnation of protest and the Bolshevik party, the Kornilov Mutiny led to another escalation, 1.2 million of the proletariat joining in the strikes throughout September and October.[79] [80]

Decreased Activity

Perhaps the most noticeable change in non-agricultural worker's role after July was the steep decrease in revolutionary activity.[81] This was for several intertwining reasons: The Provisional Government's crackdown on protest and villainization of the Bolsheviks and Lenin.[82] After the uproarious wave of violent strikes during the July Days, the Provisional Government felt the need to greatly minimize revolutionary activity, especially in relation to the Bolsheviks. This was due to the Bolshevik's central role in the labor movement and growing political power

[77]Smith, "Moscow Workers," 286-287.

[78]Mandel, "The July," 192.

[79]Rosenberg and Koenker, "The Limits," 322.

[80]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 170.

[81]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 297.

[82]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 158-159.

at the time, which could pose a threat to the Provisional Government.[83] At the tailend of the July Days, protestors began to be arrested for their actions in the strike wave, and a list of Bolsheviks to be imprisoned was created.[84] This, in turn, caused many to become wary of the Bolshevik party.[85] This wariness can be seen in the widespread loss of party members. For example, the Kronstadt branch of the Bolshevik party lost around 250 workers.[86] To further defame the Bolshevik party, the Provisional Government started a rumor about Lenin and the Bolsheviks being funded by Germany, which in the context of wartime swayed the majority of citizens against them.[87] Going into August, any potential Bolshevik party members or protestors were arrested, and it seemed that the brilliant light of revolution had dimmed among the working class.[88]

The Kornilov Affair

While workers had been accustomed to strikes from February and radicalized from the July Days, the Kornilov mutiny was the definitive turning point towards revolution in the working class. The Kornilov mutiny occurred in late August of 1917 when the leader of the Russian military, Lavr Kornilov, staged a failed coup against the Provisional Government in attempts to create a military dictatorship.[89] The cause of the coup was a misunderstanding

[83]Mandel, "The July," 194-195.

[84]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 160.

[85]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 161.

[86]Trotsky, *History of the Russian*, 543.

[87]Mandel, "The July," 192-193.

[88]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 158.

[89]Molly Martin, "The Kornilov Affair: A Failed Coup D'état," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1, https://web.mit.edu/russia1917/papers/0825-KornilovAffair.pdf

between Kerensky and Kornilov.[90] While the coup ended unsuccessfully, it had a massive impact on revolutionary Russia. For one, in order to stop the coup, Kerensky armed the Bolsheviks and working class and sent them to halt Kornilov's train and keep him from advancing.[91] While the workers had had revolutionary spirit before, they had not had access to weapons, which gave the government a decided advantage.[92] However, now they had been armed, and the worker's role in stopping Kornilov gave them a sense of their power. The disappointment of July was overwritten by newfound hope, and revolt boiled low in the working class. Additionally, Kornilov's coup imposed the very real threat of a military dictatorship on the Russian people.[93] With revolutionary leaders being imprisoned, protestors and Bolsheviks arrested, and now this failed mutiny, the threat of dictatorship hung low over the working class. This isn't even to mention the general disapproval related to Kerensky as a leader. While the Kornilov affair cemented his negative public image, he was not well liked even before. This was due to him being unwilling to deal with the agrarian question and other worker related issues and prioritizing comfort over actual reform.[94] Additionally, Kerensky and the Provisional Government's failure vindicated Lenin and the currently persecuted Bolsheviks, support for the Bolshevik party came roaring

[90]Ibid

[91]Ibid

[92]Trotsky, History of the Russian, 77.

[93]Martin, "The Kornilov," 2-3.

[94]Esther Kingston-Mann, "Lenin and the Beginnings of Marxist Peasant Revolution: The Burden of Political Opportunity, July-October 1917," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 50, no. 121 (1972): 575-576, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4206621

back.[95] [96] The Bolshevik's extremist view of total overthrow of the Provisional Government now seemed appealing. The beginning of October was starting to take shape.

The Bolshevik's Consolidation of Power

The Bolshevik consolidation of power was a slow but ultimately successful process in Revolutionary Russia. When the Provisional Government and Constituent Assembly was initially formed Bolsheviks took up a decided minority of seats, only garnering 11.7% of votes in the first Duma election.[97] [98] [99] However, as time went on and class consciousness grew among workers, the Bolsheviks began to gain more and more power in Revolutionary Russia.[100] The Bolshevik's appeal to workers was due to their unwavering support for worker's control throughout 1917.[101] Because of their lack of government involvement, they were able to stay on an ideological high horse opposed to the other parties, always in support of the working class without actually having to figure out how to create successful reform.[102] In comparison, the Provisional Government proved time and time again that they did not hold the people's best interests to heart, with Kerensky's relentless ignorance towards worker's issues leading his leadership, ultimately, to failure.[103] The war and the economy were worsening, and workers

[95]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 170.

[96]Kingston-Mann, "Lenin and the Beginnings," 578.

[97]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 123.

[98]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 134-135.

[99]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 202.

[100]Kaplan, "II: Labor," 60-61.

[101]Bonnell, "Rethinking the Role," 56.

[102]Kaplan, "II: Labor," 51.

[103]Kingston-Mann, "Lenin and the Beginnings," 575-576.

couldn't do anything about it.[104] Additionally, the failed coup of the Kornilov mutiny, the frequent turnover of government and the uncooperating factory management created a sense of chaos and a lack of control.[105] With these factors creating increasing unrest, the Bolshevik party acted as an answer to the worker's prayers, promising everything they were wishing for and more.[106] This was further compounded as Lenin and the Bolsheviks were increasingly vindicated in their extreme viewpoint, with the Kornilov mutiny acting as the escalation of ideology that finally brought the majority of the working class under the Bolshevik's arms.[107] The Bolshevik's control of the factory committees also helped the workers see them as part of their team rather than the enemy or part of the failing government structure, leading to their consolidation of power.[108] All this taken into account, everything was falling into place just as stated in Marx's dialectical, with the Russian working class desperate enough to function as a militia to the Bolshevik's revolutionary vanguard party.[109] [110]

October Itself

In opposition to both the February Revolution and the July Days, the October Revolution was highly organized, being primarily led by the revolutionary leaders of the time.[111] Similarly to

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[104]Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, 313.

[105]Kingston-Mann, "Lenin and the Beginnings," 578.

[106]Bonnell, "Rethinking the Role," 56.

[107]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 170.

[108]Kaplan, "II: Labor," 51.

[109]Marx and Engels, "The Communist", 88.

[110]Kaplan, "II: Labor," 59-60.

[111]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 177.

July, the October Revolution began with worker's desires to revolt reaching a breaking point without Bolshevik leadership supporting a full-scale revolution.[112] Yet, after July's failure, workers didn't set out on their own. Instead, a wave of peasant revolts and Lenin's persuasion was what finally pushed Bolshevik representatives to endorse the revolt, the rest of the working class quickly following suit.[113] While not necessarily the leading factor anymore, workers played a massive role in the October Revolution.[114] As per Marx's dialectical, they served as the force necessary to overthrow the Provisional Government.[115] This is shown in *A People's History of the Russian Revolution,* where Neil Faulkner writes "The workers… combined revolutionary determination with vast numbers. Their military arm… would provide the bulk of the fighting forces of the October Insurrection."[116] Yet, there were several key factors in the success of the October Revolution other than just the power of the working class. Firstly, the peasants, which vastly outnumbered the non-agricultural working class, had also become radicalized due to the biased land struggle between themselves and the government.[117] Another factor was the majority of soldiers joining the Bolsheviks, which also helped the revolutionary tide turn in February. This shift was due to the Kornilov mutiny leading the soldiers to lose faith in the military system.[118] Lastly, the ability of the Bolshevik party to bring these groups of struggling peoples together into a revolutionary army ensured success.[119] As Faulkner put it, "The Bolshevik party - a nationwide

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[112]Ibid

[113]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 175-177.

[114]Rosenberg, "Workers and Workers," 95.

[115]Marx and Engels, "The Communist", 88.

[116]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 182.

[117]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 175-177.

[118]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 180.

[119]Bonnell, "Rethinking the Role," 57.

network of revolutionary militants rooted in the class struggle of the workers, soldiers and sailors - was essential to the success of the revolution. This network was the primary transmitter of revolutionary ideas… and the primary mechanism for organising united mass action at every level."[120] With all of these factors put together, October was successful, and the working class had effectively transformed. No more was the disorganized struggle and hope in the Provisional Government that had characterized non-agricultural workers after February.[121] Now, having been radicalized due to their conditions, the working class was firmly under the leadership of the Bolshevik party and committed to revolt.[122]

Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of non-agricultural workers in the 1917 revolution initially could be characterized as individual factions using methods of protest to create reform in the Provisional Government and industrial systems before it shifted to more organized revolt focusing on overthrowing the ruling class. While the working class began using methods of strike to create reform, the continuing failures of the Provisional Government, the growing rift between the upper and working classes, the Bolshevik's consolidation of power, and a failing economy led to developing class consciousness among workers. After the failed coup of the Kornilov mutiny and the intense response to protest in August, the working class had effectively changed motives, growing resentment for the Provisional Government giving way to revolutionary aspiration. As a result, workers took a central role in the October Revolution. In

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[120]Faulkner, "Part II: The Tempest," 191.

[121]Suny, "Toward a Social," 36.

[122]Suny, "Toward a Social," 38.

this, workers had gone from upholding the Provisional Government to tearing it down as an armed militia, all in a matter of months.

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